

Subtext and Coded Characters in Media: Superman's Identity Revealed

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by

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Abstract

Anti-Semitism can be seen in our history dating back to the death of Jesus. The continuation of Anti-Semitic beliefs can be seen in the Holocaust and in the recent attacks on Synagogues. Superman is a hero who made his appearance in 1938 a year before the official beginning of WWII and at the height of the German American Bund. Due to the length at which Anti-Semitism has existed in our history, it has pervaded our media. Jewish characters are usually written in certain stereotypical roles. Superman is not Jewish, but he's Jewish coded. Superman has been compared to Moses and the Golem. He was more Jewish coded in his first year of publication. During this first year he became increasingly popular making him a household name, and after that Superman was written more conservatively. Attempting to tone down a character who isn't even Jewish, but is just Jewish coded, is an example of how deep Anti-Semitism runs in our media. Better representation of minority characters is a necessary part of creating better, more realistic content. People use stories to understand the world, but as of right now those stories are not for everyone. Our media can and should be better.